



SOUTHWEST CHIEF & FRONT RANGE  
PASSENGER RAIL COMMISSION

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The central graphic features a logo with a stylized mountain range and a train silhouette. Below the logo is the text "SOUTHWEST CHIEF & FRONT RANGE PASSENGER RAIL COMMISSION". This text is repeated in a larger font below a semi-transparent white rectangular area that covers a background image of a train station platform with a crowd of people.



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PASSENGER RAIL COMMISSION

# Southwest Chief and Front Range Passenger Rail Commission

- Legislature's Senate Bill 17 – 153 created the Commission (effective July 1, 2017). It replaced the previous Southwest Chief Commission which had existed since 2014
- Housed under CDOT; similar to HPTE and Bridge Enterprise in terms of independence reporting to a Board/Commission other than the Transportation Commission
- 11 voting Commissioners
  - Five appointed by the Governor: two Class I railroad representatives (BNSF and UP), two advocates for passenger rail, one resident of Huerfano, Las Animas, Otero, Prowers or Pueblo counties that advocates for passenger rail.
  - One each from the four Front Range MPOs and one from South Central Council of Governments
  - One from RTD
- 3 non-voting members
  - CDOT
  - Amtrak
  - Cheyenne, Wyoming

# Commission's Purposes

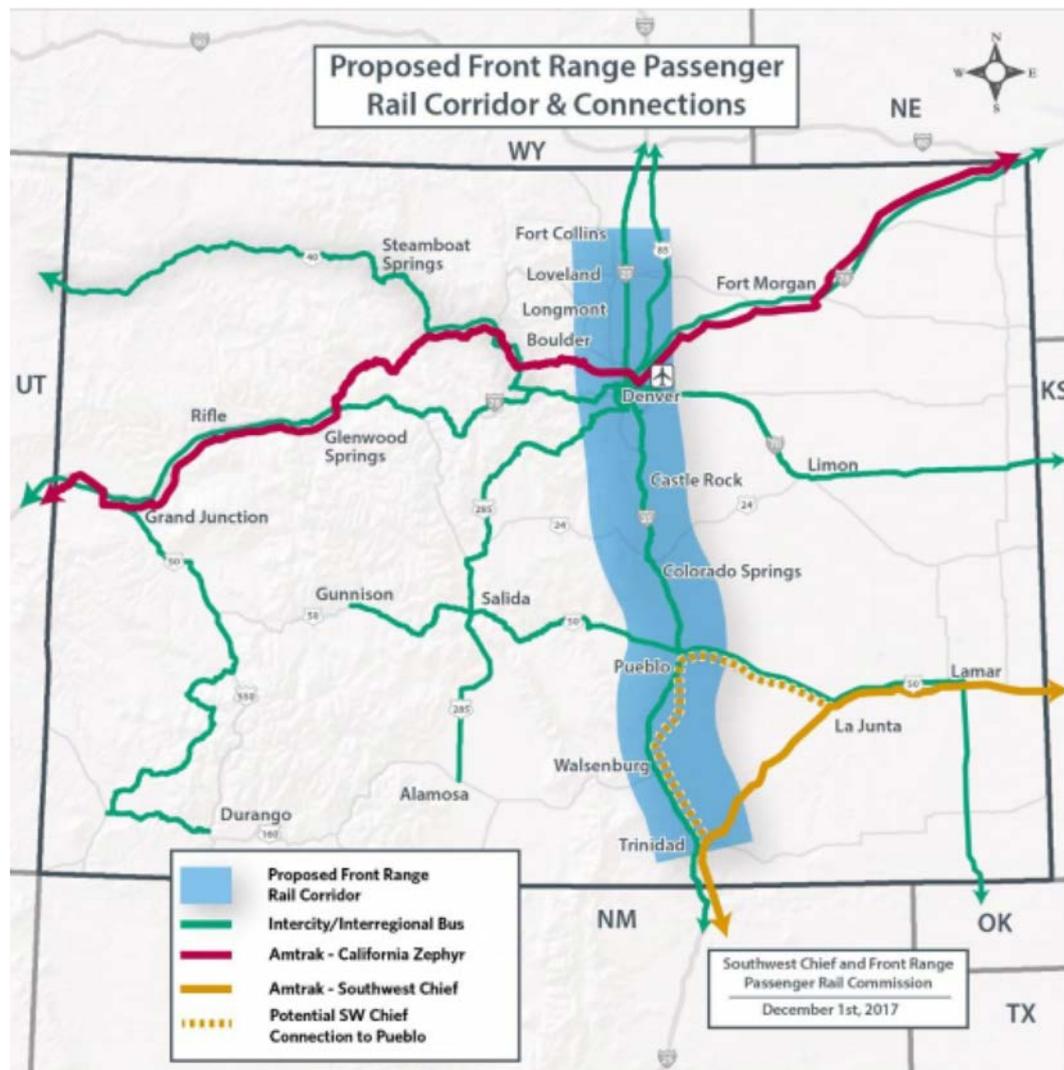


- Work to preserve Amtrak's Southwest Chief service across southeast Colorado
- Work with neighboring states of Kansas and New Mexico to upgrade rails, ties, signal systems and other rail infrastructure on BNSF's Amtrak Southwest Chief route across the three states
- Pursue possible Amtrak Southwest Chief service extension into Pueblo and possibly Colorado Springs from La Junta
- Consider re-routing the Southwest Chief service between La Junta and Trinidad by way of Pueblo and Walsenburg to better serve southern Colorado
- Facilitate the development of Front Range Passenger Rail service



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## Proposed Front Range Passenger Rail Corridor, Amtrak, and Intercity/Interregional Bus Routes





# Why the Renewed Interest in Passenger Rail?

- Highway congestion is getting worse; travel time is increasing and is less predictable
- State's population grew by 2.2 million from 1990 – 2016
- Fort Collins to Pueblo Front Range Corridor has 83.5 % of state's 5.6 million population; Corridor will gain 84% of state's additional 3 million residents by 2050.
- Population 65 and over to increase by 61% between 2010 and 2020 and an additional 39% between 2020 and 2030
- Front Range may be losing ability to be economically competitive with other major US population bases; most having existing or planned Passenger Rail Service to provide mobility options for residents and other travelers
- Younger population groups prefer reliable "Transit" over owning a car and associated costs

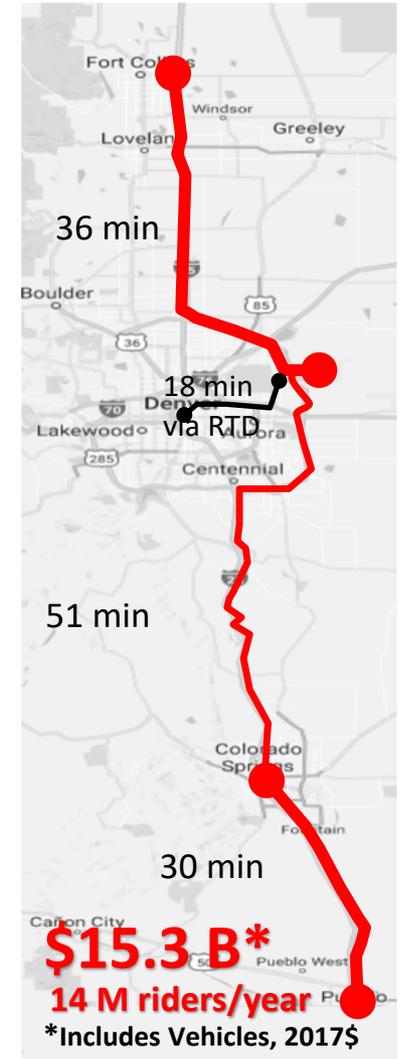
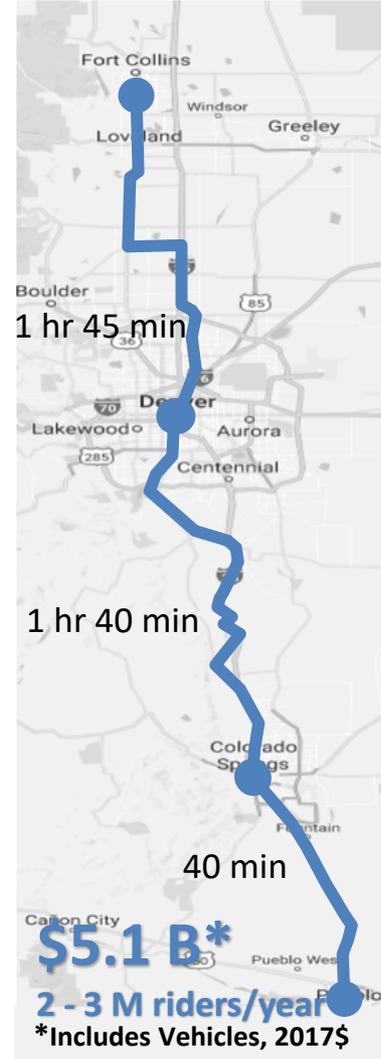
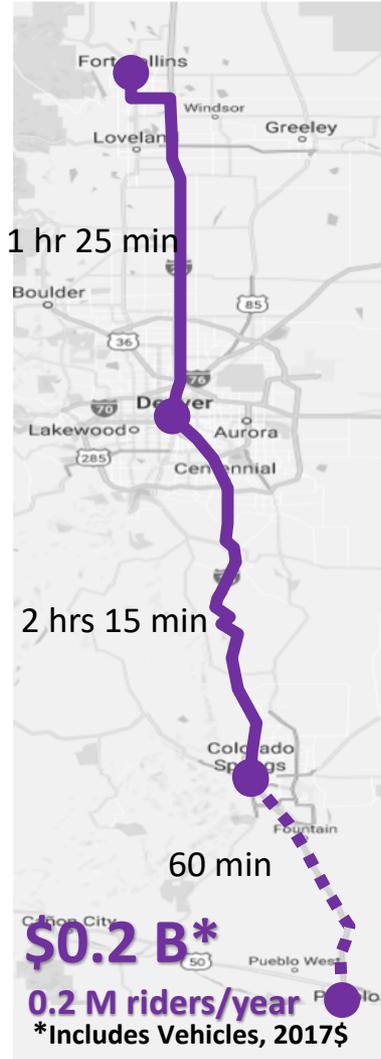


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# FRONT RANGE: BUS TRANSIT & STUDIED RAIL OPTIONS

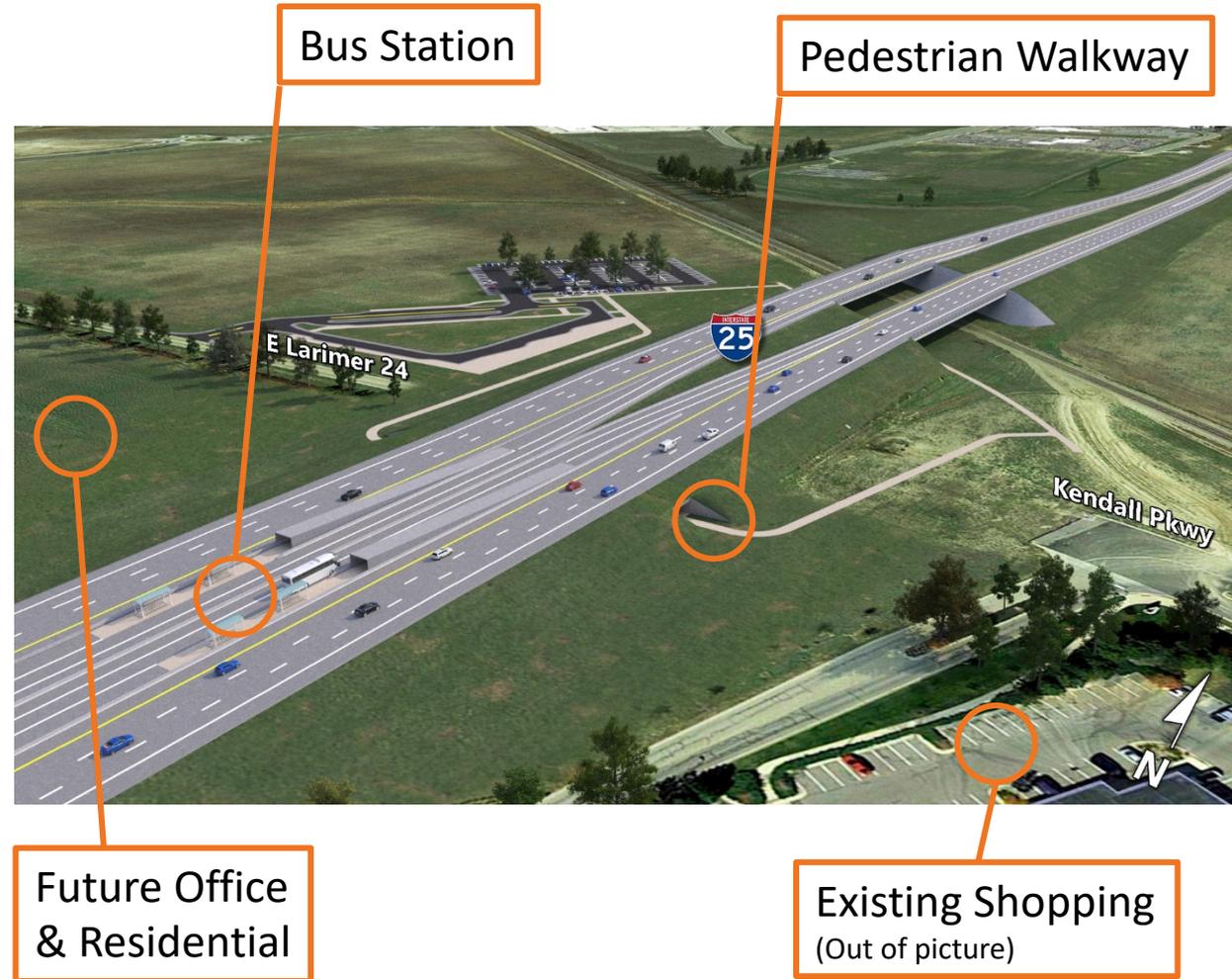
**Bustang (w/ future Park & Rides) Commuter Rail + RTD**

**High Speed Rail ICS**





## HIGHWAY MOBILITY HUB CONCEPT ON I-25 N/O US 34 (EAST OF LOVELAND)



Mobility Hubs along the Front Range serve as precursor investments for eventual Front Range Passenger Rail stops



# 2018 Accomplishments

## Funding

- March – \$16.0 million TIGER IX grant received to replace 60-year old bolted rail, turnouts and at-grade crossing surfaces on the BNSF's trackage in KS, CO, and NM utilized by Amtrak's Southwest Chief connecting Chicago and Los Angeles by way of southeast Colorado. Also, some funding for signal system upgrades to New Mexico's Rail Runner Commuter service.
- May 31 – Senate Bill 18-001 is signed by Governor with \$2.5 million for Passenger Rail Commission. (studies, staffing and federal grant match)
- December – Received \$9.16 million CRISI Grant to install Positive Train Control (PTC) on 179 miles of BNSF track between Dodge City, KS and Las Animas, CO as required by Amtrak for continued operations.



# 2018 Accomplishments (Cont.)

## Staffing Timeline

- November 1, 2018 – Project Director position posted
- December 22 – Interviews held; Project Director on board February 19th
- Support position job announcement in May; 19 qualified individuals submitted applications; selection expected in June



# Next Steps: Planning and Environmental

## ELEMENTS REQUIRED IN RAIL PASSENGER SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- Purpose and Need for Front Range Passenger Rail Service
- Corridor options/potential feasible alignments, including possible connections to RTD's Passenger Rail Corridors
- Potential speeds/technology
  - Ridership forecasting based on speed/technology
- Levels of service (number of trains per day)
- Stations/Mobility Hubs/transit connections
- High level cost estimates for Pre-construction, Construction, Equipment, Operating, etc.
- Benefit - Cost Analysis
- Potential Service operator (Amtrak, BNSF Railway, Herzog, etc.)
- Governance (Special District, Regional Transportation Authority [RTA], etc.)



# Current Commission Activities

**Reviewing Consultant Team Proposals; Hire Consultant for Rail Passenger Service Development Plan and environmental work in early August**

**Update Commission's Dec. 2017 Charter**

**Communications Sub-Committee Created**

- Created Passenger Rail Commission logo
- Updating Commission's Website
- Develop other communication tools to drive Commission outreach (tri-fold Brochure, etc.)

**Work with Amtrak, neighboring states of Kansas and New Mexico on long-range Southwest Chief "Business Plan"**

**Work with Amtrak, BNSF and neighboring States and communities in applying for "2019 BUILD Grant" to continue upgrades to BNSF's track on the Southwest Chief route.**

**Hold monthly Commission meetings (2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of each month); every other meeting is at a Front Range location outside of the Denver metro area**

# PRINCIPLES FOR RAIL MOBILITY BUILDOUT



- Preserve rights-of-way in corridors where future passenger rail may be located (existing railroads, highways, etc.)
- To justify new Front Range Passenger Rail, the selected outcome should have:
  - Competitive peak hour travel times with other modes, including Bustang in a managed lane; and/or
  - Volume of riders large enough that a stream of buses carrying 50 passengers isn't enough capacity (i.e. a bus every 3.75 minutes – similar to Flatiron Flyer service on US 36); and/or
  - Conditions which prevent expansion of bus service in a managed lane from being an effective solution; i.e. excessive grades and/or regular accidents.



# PRINCIPLES FOR RAIL MOBILITY BUILDOUT (cont'd)

- Provide choices/options to driving and related parking availability/cost
- Phasing (Starter Rail) may be a less expensive way to initiate service
- Connectivity to transit (Mobility Hubs) is critical to success
- Highway congestion relief and economic development are key reasons for building rail
  - The willingness to accept dense development at stations will determine the market for private investment and Public Private Partnerships (P3s)
- The faster the technology, the straighter the alignment needs to be, and the more environmental / community impacts there will be
- Ensure future connections to Regional or National High Speed Rail networks are not precluded

# CDOT ABILITY TO LEVERAGE & PLAN



- CDOT Offer of In-Kind Staff Resources to Passenger Rail Commission
  - Technical environmental experts who know I-25 North, I-25 South, and other corridor locations
  - Travel Demand Modeling staff
  - Office of Communications support
  - Traffic Experts who have highway/rail/bus connection experience
    - T-REX Project on Denver Southeast I-25 Corridor
    - North I-25 Kendall / Centerra-Loveland Station
- CDOT can Pursue External Funding as an “Eligible Applicant”
  - TIGER 7, TIGER 9, CRISI grant examples for Southwest Chief
  - TIGER 8 example for North I-25
  - BUILD and other grants, i.e. US 550, Southwest Chief
  - Prior and current investments by CDOT could leverage future corridor level funding

# Questions?



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